

LETTER OF A. B. SLOANAKER

TO THE

Hon. Secretary of the Treasury of the United States,

IN REFUTATION OF

CHARGES AND DISMISSAL FROM THE CUSTOM HOUSE,

AS PREFERRED AND ENFORCED BY

WM. B. THOMAS, COLLECTOR OF THE PORT OF PHILADELPHIA.

No. 109 NORTH SEVENTH STREET, }
Philadelphia, January 2d, 1865. }

HON. WM. PITT FESSENDEN,

SECRETARY OF THE U. S. TREASURY,

WASHINGTON, D. C.:

MY DEAR SIR:

In view of the fact that Mr. Wm. B. Thomas, Collector of this Port, alleges in the letter to your Department, transmitting my dismissal—the cause to be “neglect of duty”—I deem it my imperative duty, as an act of justice to myself, and further to disabuse the mind of the Department, to submit for consideration the true record of the case, which I think will conclusively show this allegation to be a mere pretext, based on falsehood. I cannot in a fairer way commence this review, than by first drawing your attention to Mr. Thomas’ letter of suspension, which is hereto annexed, marked “A.” Immediately after receiving this note, I waited on Mr. W. B. Thomas, where the facts developed themselves as is explained in my letter to Gen. Simon Cameron, marked “B.” It will be perceived by this letter, which, since its date, has been verified to under oath, that the Collector’s antipathy was actually superinduced, although not enforced, on account of a difference existing anterior to my suspension. This difference commenced in this wise: I received the hereto annexed note, marked “C,” in obedience to which I attended the caucus, where Mr. Thomas, after issuing his mandates in regard to the defeat of H. B. M. Birkenbine, Esq., for Civil Engineer of the Philadelphia Water Works, and also eulogizing the claims of Messrs. Myers and Parker for said position, although both of these gentlemen were then, as now, employees in the Custom House, proceeded to discuss the then approaching Presidential nomination. After asserting the claims of the Hon. Salmon P. Chase, then Secretary of the Treasury Department, to whom he claimed we were all indebted for our places, he dismissed us for active political operations. From that moment, I resolved to become a delegate

to the Baltimore Convention, in the interests of the people, whom I knew were, in common with myself, determined upon the re-nomination of President Lincoln as a necessary means of finishing the policy inaugurated to successfully preserve the life of the nation. Soon after entering into the canvass, I discovered that such satellites as Messrs. Walkinshaw and Huckle were threatening the men in the Custom House who were favorable to my election, and also personally annoying me in the discharge of my official duties, although Mr. Kennedy McCaw, also of the Custom House, was allowed a just and generous latitude in prosecuting his canvass for the same honors. In spite of their opposition, I was victorious, having received the highest number of votes in the convention.

For the purpose of showing the Department the character of their operations, I have hereto annexed, by permission, portions of the letter marked "D," which show how the Hon. Wm. D. Kelley was similarly treated. This, I believe, was the cause that produced the pretext for my dismissal, and in which sacrifice I have willingly acquiesced until this late day, for the reason that I believed the interests of our cause demanded it as a necessary means to the ultimate success of the Baltimore nominations. For the purpose of showing how the situation was viewed by some of my friends, I hereto annex the letter marked "E," which explains itself. As to the allegation of my neglect of duty, I hereto annex the testimonials marked "F," in rebuttal of the charge, and on which I rest, as a satisfactory defence on that point, only adding, as a corroboration, the testimonials marked "G," which show how I heretofore discharged the duties of other public positions. To all of this evidence, I have thought best to add testimonials of my political and social worth, marked "H," and by which the Department can form some estimation of the person who asks the privilege of having this letter placed on file in common with Collector Thomas' order of dismissal, so that at any future time any one whom it may concern can have an opportunity of inspecting both sides of this disputed difficulty, and thereby form a just judgment according to the merits of the case as presented by either party.

I have the honor to be, with feelings of high consideration,

Your obedient servant,

A. B. SLOANAKER,

*Late delegate from 1st District Penna. to Baltimore
National Union Convention.*

EVIDENCE AND TESTIMONIALS.

(A)

CUSTOM HOUSE, PHILADELPHIA,
Collector's Office, May 20th, 1864. }

SIR:

You are hereby suspended from your duties as Storekeeper, on account of neglect of duty.

Very Respectfully, Yours,

WM. B. THOMAS, *Collector.*

To A. B. SLOANAKER, Esq.,

Storekeeper at Patterson's U. S. Bonded Stores.

(B)

HARRISBURG, MAY 28TH, 1864.

GEN'L SIMON CAMERON:

MY DEAR GENERAL:

I came to Harrisburg in main to see you about a matter purely personal to myself, and to procure your advice thereon. The facts in the case are these: on the 20th inst., while engaged with my brother Delegate, (William Andrews, Esq.,) with the Presidents of the Baltimore and Pennsylvania Rail Road Companies, I found that Collector Thomas had suspended me from the duties of my office. A copy of his letter of suspension I herewith enclose. On the afternoon of this day, I, in company with Select Councilman Omerly, of the Sixth Ward, visited the Collector at his residence, where the following facts developed themselves: I told Mr. Thomas that I had received his letter of suspension, and had called on him for the purpose of having an understanding. I also related the cause of my absence from the Stores, (it being on business for the delegation, of which your telegrams should have been sufficient proof, as I showed them to him.) Mr. Thomas replied, by saying, "that he wanted no understanding, and that I had no right to have any business without his consent," and added, "you assume too much, sir! For how did you know, after you was elected a National Delegate, that I would give you my consent, or allow you to attend the convention." I replied, "that, independent of my rights as a free citizen, I had assurances from Gen'l Cameron that he would procure from him (Thomas) a leave of absence, and that I also thought that the administration wanted my vote." Mr. Thomas said: "I care nothing for Gen'l Cameron, sir! Perhaps Mr. Lincoln may want your vote, if he is the administration, but I, with some others, do not think he is." At this stage of the interview, matters grew warm. "I see you are out for Congress, sir!" said he; "you have no right to hold and seek an office at the same time, and you must, therefore, either withdraw from the contest, or resign your place in the Custom House." To this demand, after some excited conversation, I most positively refused to comply, and from that moment my suspension became, in my judgment, a dismissal from office. General! I was determined that rather than sacrifice my manhood and my personal character in society, I would sacrifice all the official positions in the country. I may have acted, on the spur of the moment, with haste, but still my conscience tells me that I did what was right in the premises. I submit these facts for your consideration and advice. Hoping that you will excuse the informal and disconnected manner in which I have addressed you, I am

Truly, your friend,

A. B. SLOANAKER.

I was with friend Sloanaker, at the time and on the occasion above referred to, and with pleasure certify on honor, that the above statement is true in every particular.

GEORGE F. OMERLY.

Personally appeared before the undersigned, an Alderman for the Sixth Ward, in the City of Philadelphia, the above named A. B. Sloanaker and George F. Omerly, who, being duly sworn according to law, do depose and say, that the above statement, subscribed respectively by them, is true in every particular to the best of their knowledge and belief.

Sworn and subscribed before me, this 2nd }
day of January, 1865. }
CHAS. WELDING, Alderman. }

A. B. SLOANAKER,
GEO. F. OMERLY.

(C)

(Confidential.)

CUSTOM HOUSE, PHILADELPHIA, }
Collector's Office, December 14th, 1863. }

SIR :

As concert of action is necessary to efficiency in the support of the Government and its policy, I deem it important that when a meeting is called of those in connection with this Department, upon what appears sufficient authority, a full attendance should take place. I trust you will therefore, unless some insurmountable obstacle intervenes to prevent, be present on such occasion.

Very respectfully, yours,

WM. B. THOMAS,
Collector.

To A. B. SLOANAKER, Esq.

(D)

CUSTOM HOUSE, PHILADELPHIA, }
Collector's Office, August 3d, 1864. }

SIR :

* * * * *
* * "There are numerous parties calling here relative to being candidates for the Congressional Conventions. Dr. Smith called and said that Martin and officer McGinly could be of great service to him. *His sincere wish is to defeat Judge Kelley.* I find that at the Club and elsewhere, a growing desire to see him (Kelley) defeated. Have I your sanction as to the course that the officers should pursue relative to the same. I am well aware of your desire on this subject, but I would rather have your sanction, before I do anything in the matter.

I am, very respectfully, your ob't servant,

A. M. WALKINSHAW,
Deputy Collector.

Colonel Wm. B. THOMAS, Command'g 192d Reg't, P. V.

(E)

HARRISBURG, JUNE 28TH, 1864.

DEAR SIR :

* * * * *
* * "I am anxious to know how your affair with the Collector terminated. If you are not restored to all your rights, I am confident the President will come to your aid; and as I am in some measure the cause of your sinning, it is my duty to see that you do not suffer all the penalty.

Very truly, your friend,

SIMON CAMERON.

To A. B. SLOANAKER, Esq.

(F)

PENN WAREHOUSE,
Front Street, below Pine,
Philadelphia, Dec. 19, 1864. }

A. B. SLOANAKER, Esq.:

DEAR SIR:

It gives me pleasure, in compliance with your request, to add my testimony to your good conduct when on duty at this Warehouse as U. S. Storekeeper. While protecting carefully the interests of the Government, you were uniformly courteous, attentive and obliging to all with whom your official duties brought you into contact, and I have no knowledge of any case in which you failed to secure their cordial good will, for you never neglected your duty. For myself it will always afford me sincere gratification to serve you.

Very respectfully, your friend,

WM. C. PATTERSON,

Owner and Bondsman of Patterson's U. S. Stores.

Permit me to concur in the above note from Colonel Patterson, our President.

J. M. COLLINGWOOD,

Treas. Penn Warehouse Co.

I most cheerfully concur in the above recommendation of Colonel Wm. C. Patterson, in the recommendation of Mr. A. B. Sloanaker.

D. C. SKERRETT,

Storekeeper of the Port of Philada.

I concur in the foregoing testimonials, so far as my relations with Mr. Sloanaker gave me an opportunity to observe his official conduct.

O. G. HEMPSTEAD,

Clerk in charge of Storekeeper's Desk at Custom House.

I concur with pleasure in all the above, and will further add, that as your reports came to my desk, I always found them correct, that you attended faithfully to your duties, to my entire personal satisfaction, and also to that of this office.

SAM'L BAIRD,

Clerk in charge of Storekeeper's Desk, Naval Office.

So far as our knowledge goes, we cheerfully concur in the above.

EDW. WALLACE,

Naval Officer, Philada.

CHAS. M. HALL,

Dep'y Surveyor, Philada.

After nearly eighteen years' experience in the Custom House, in various capacities, I take pleasure in concurring in all the above testimonials as to the capacity and universal faithfulness of A. B. Sloanaker, Esq.

WM. HARBESON,

Late Dep'y Collector of the Port of Philada.

CUSTOM HOUSE, PHILADELPHIA, }

Surveyor's Office, Jan. 4, 1865. }

SIR:

In reply to your inquiry, I am able to say that I never heard any complaints against you by the officers in this Department of the Customs while you were acting as Storekeeper at Patterson's Bonded Warehouse, and I believe you discharged your duty properly, and to the satisfaction of the business men that came in contact with you officially.

Very respectfully,

E. REED MYER,

Surveyor.

A. B. SLOANAKER, Esq.

(G)

PHILADELPHIA, DECEMBER 24TH, 1864.

A. B. SLOANAKER, Esq.:

DEAR SIR:

It gives me pleasure in complying with your note of the 22nd inst., to state, that so far as I am aware, you discharged the

ALEX' R HENRY

duties of a telegraph operator, connected with the Police Department, faithfully and efficiently, although the confinement incident to such office must have been very repugnant to your characteristic energy: I have always noted your efforts for advancement, and knowing that you possess many of the essential qualities for success, I have looked confidently for your attaining it.

Truly, yours,

ALEX' R HENRY,
Mayor of Philadelphia.

After years of long connection in business with Mr. A. B. Sloanaker, I do most cheerfully concur in the above testimony of his Honor, Mayor Henry, in his behalf.

D. R. WALKER,
Asst. Superintendent Police and Fire Telegraph.

I, also, most cheerfully concur in the above.

SAM'L G. RUGGLES,
Chief of Police.

I, also, with pleasure, concur.

A. W. BLACKBURN,
Fire Marshal.

PHILADELPHIA, DECEMBER 27, 1864.

A. B. SLOANAKER, Esq.:

DEAR SIR:

It gives me pleasure to add my testimony in your behalf, and to endorse all that is said. When my office was organized, you took charge of the clothing department until my clerk was appointed, and I am happy to say, that while under your sole control, the business was systematically managed to my entire satisfaction. I cheerfully credit you with fidelity, accuracy and promptness, in the assistance rendered, and what was most honorable, all this was done without any pecuniary advantage, directly or indirectly, to yourself. I sincerely desire your welfare, and hold myself ready to serve you at any time.

Very truly, your friend,

WM. E. LEHMAN,
Capt. and Provost Marshal, 1st District, Pa.

(H)

PHILADELPHIA, DECEMBER 26, 1864.

We, the undersigned, Officers and Members of the various Councils of the "Union League of America," of the First Congressional District of Pennsylvania, take pleasure in joining in the testimonials in behalf of our brother, A. B. Sloanaker, Esq., and will further add, that the energy and sagacity displayed by him in the various canvasses, were fruitful in the interests of the Government.

Very Respectfully,

C. B. Pottenger, President of Council No. 14, 2nd Ward.

E. Marcelis, Vice " " " "

Robt. T. Gill, Secretary " " "

Jos. Orr, County Delegate, " " "

Geo. Kelly, " No. 16, 3d "

R. G. Simpson " " "

W. B. Hamm, " " "

W. H. Benckert, Marshal, " No. 25, 4th "

A. R. Underdown, " " "

H. H. Dietz, Vice President, " No. 13, 5th "

Wm. Campbell, " " "

Wm. Pierce, " " "

E. Worrell, President, pro tem., " No. 17, 6th "

Jackson Leidy, Secretary, " " "

Wm. H. Wakefield, Vice-Pres't, " " "

David Shourds, Marshal, " " "

J. Hibbs, Sentinel, " " "

Michael B. Andrews, Secretary, " No. 18, 11th "

James Porter, Treasurer, " " "

J. P. Shelmire, " " "

C. B. Andress, President, " " "

PHILADELPHIA, DECEMBER 29, 1864.

A. B. SLOANAKER, Esq.:

DEAR SIR:

It gives me pleasure to bear testimony to your fidelity to Republicanism and the cause of freedom. Long before the triumph of the Republican party, I knew you as one of the earliest members of the Free Soil party, rendering good service in the cause of human liberty; and during long years of delay, faithfully adhering to the principles by which our cause finally triumphed in the election of our present excellent chief-magistrate. During these years of deferred success you were always faithful, active and laborious in promoting the success of our cause, and have brought with you into the Republican ranks the same energy of purpose and action, and fidelity to Republican principles, which marked your earlier advocacy of the cause. Indeed I know no gentleman who, either by fidelity to Republicanism, or in indomitable energy in promoting the success of the party, or capability for active political labor, is better entitled to the rewards which the party owes to its faithful servants.

Truly yours,

WM. S. PIERCE,

*Former Free Soil Candidate for Congress, and
also Republican Candidate for City Solicitor.*

A. B. SLOANAKER:

From a long personal acquaintance I am enabled and take pleasure in endorsing the statement of our mutual friend, Wm. S. Pierce, Esq., in the within letter; and cordially commend you to the favorable consideration of the several departments of our government, as one deserving honors and reward from all true friends of liberty and union.

Respectfully yours,

PASSMORE WILLIAMSON,

Of American and Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.

It gives me pleasure to concur in the above, as I know, by an experience of years, that all the foregoing is true and just in every particular.

WM. R. HEINS,

A true Free Soiler since the days of 1848.

PHILADELPHIA, DECEMBER 30, 1864.

A. B. SLOANAKER, Esq.:

MY DEAR SIR:

Allow me not only to concur in your testimonials, but also to bear my testimony in behalf of your political sagacity, as displayed on election days in our election division, where you not only go after and bring forward voters, but are also constantly on hand, looking after the interests of the party. In all my long experience and residence in this division, I know of none who displays more activity and interest, and whose workings are proffered with so much good, as is shown by the largely increased majority in the division in the recent Presidential Election. At the Commercial Hotel, where you reside, you are indispensable, for you personally and solely superintend the party's interest with the large number of voters at this house. I assure you, not only myself, but the friends of the party appreciate and much respect your services in this division.

I am very truly your friend,

JOHN G. BUTLER,

Chief Coiner United States Mint, and Chairman of Committee on Mass Meetings, City Union Executive Committee, Philadelphia.

I also concur, for I believe I express the general sentiment of our Association in so doing.

WM. H. BARNES,

President of 6th Ward National Union Association, of Philadelphia.

I, with pleasure, in behalf of the Committee, also concur.

JACKSON LEIDY,

Chairman of 6th Ward National Union Executive Committee.

I most heartily, in behalf of our friends at this house, concur in the above.

A. J. BROWER.

Proprietor Commercial Hotel.

We, the undersigned, Union Election Officers of the 5th Precinct of the 6th Ward of Philadelphia, take pleasure in concurring in the above.

N. T. BAROUX,

Judge.

R. C. WALBORN,

Inspector.

S. A. ROBERTS,

Return Inspector.

I desire to concur in the foregoing recommendations of A. B. Sloanaker, Esq., believing and knowing that he is in every way worthy of the same.

WM. ELLIOTT,

Chairman Union City Executive Committee, Phila.

In concurring in all the above, allow me to add that, in my judgment, your political influence and labors, as a speaker and worker in the various canvasses of Philadelphia, cannot be too highly estimated or appreciated.

ROBT. T. GILL,

Secretary of Union City Executive Committee.

As to the interest and energy displayed, and my general conduct at the Baltimore Convention, I unhesitatingly refer, not only to the entire Illinois delegation, but also to the following delegates:

Hon. Jas. M. Scovell, New Jersey.

E. Ward, M. D., Pennsylvania.

Col. Peter C. Ellmaker, "

Jno. Holmes, "

Wm. Andrews, "

Chas. Thompson Jones, "

Hon. Galusha A. Grow, "

Geo. Bergner, "

Jno. B. Packer, "

L. J. Rogers, "

Hon. A. K. McClure, "

" S. A. Purviance, "

" Thaddeus Stevens, "

Hon. Wm. Dennison, Ohio

" David Tod, "

" Columbus Delano, "

G. V. Dorsey, M. D., "

Jno. W. Ray, Indiana,

Hon. A. W. Randall, Wisconsin.

" Jno. F. Potter, "

Rev. R. G. Breckinridge, Kentucky.

Hon. Green Clay Smith, "

" Thompson Campbell, California.

Rev. T. H. Pearne, Oregon.

Hiram Smith, "

Ex-Gov. P. King, New York.

And also to Colonel John W. Forney, of Pennsylvania, J. Russell Young and Charles C. Wilson, Esqs., of *Forney's Press*, Philadelphia, and will, in addition, take the liberty of referring, as to my general political and social character, to the Honorables the Messrs. Kelley, O'Neill, and Myers, our present Representatives in Congress from this city.

A. B. SLOANAKER.